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ABSTRACT

This report is the second in a series describing the background, theory, and progress of the Differentiated Staffing Project in the Eugene, Oregon, School District. The report discusses the Organizational Development Training Program, its rationale, its activities, and its relationship to the Unitized Project. It describes the main ideas of OD Training and the procedures used by the DSP coordinators to link this training component to the DS Project. The major emphasis of Organizational Development Training is on improving the "self-changing ability of school organizations," i.e., giving school systems a capacity for "organizational self-renewal." The program helps groups to develop clear communication, build trust and increase understanding, involve more people in the decisionmaking process, create open problem solving climates, increase group effectiveness, and uncover conflict. (Author)

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PROGRESS REPORT NO. 2

TITLE:

"Organizational Development Training in the Unitized, Differentiated Staffing, Elementary School"

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FOCUS ON:

ORGANIZATIONAL TRAINING

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PURPOSE

This report discusses the Organizational Development Training Program, its rationale, its activities, and its relationship to the Unitized Differentiated Staffing Project in Eugene. The report describes the main ideas of OD Training and the procedures used by the DSP Coordinators to link this particular training component to the DS Project. The relationship of the Eugene DS Project to the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration (CASEA) at the University of Oregon is also detailed for the reader.

IN PERSPECTIVE

The Unitized, Differentiated Staffing School has the potential for accomplishing many educational objectives. It provides the setting for involvement of human beings--both teachers and learners--within the schools. It allows for dispersed decision-making, positive communication, and warm interpersonal relationships. Within this organizational structure is the potential for both students and faculty to achieve individual growth and self-renewal. It provides a framework for individualizing instruction and humanizing the process of education.

Many other ideas in education have held this same potential for accomplishing similar educational objectives. However, educators' attempts to translate these ideas from theory to definite practices and procedures in the daily work of the school have often met with failure. Too often the rhetoric of an innovation is adopted, but the people who must implement the idea go on behaving in traditional ways. This is true of numerous attempts to change curriculum and teaching strategies. It is particularly true when the organization and structure of the school is to be changed, as when traditional teaching roles are

to be re-defined and traditional ways of working together transformed.

The problem does not seem to be a lack of good ideas or worthwhile innovations. Rather, the difficulty seems to lie in the process of change. Past change efforts have failed largely because the innovation was imposed on school staffs by outsiders or because isolated individuals found their efforts to change frustrated by their colleagues' lack of interest or resistance. These barriers can be overcome when staff members support each others' innovative attempts, and when staff members feel truly committed to the decision to change. Therefore, the DS Coordinators decided early in the project that the target of change should be groups rather than individuals. Further, it was strongly agreed by the Coordinators that the people who had to carry out the new organizational pattern should participate in designing it.

The idea that groups that work together need to learn and practice together is common in other fields but not common in education. It would be difficult to imagine an athletic team having much success, regardless of each individual's talents, if the members of the team did not spend considerable time practicing together. Similarly, it would be expected that members of a surgical team or a symphony orchestra should spend a considerable amount of practice time together learning how to work as a unit and how to integrate each person's skills into the group effort. In contrast, school staffs or other groups of educators seldom learn or practice together. Instead they go off to workshops, summer schools, or teacher-training programs in which little attention is paid to the question of how to combine resources to make the total effect greater than the sum of individual efforts.

Recognizing these difficulties, it was strongly felt that the effort to reorganize elementary schools and differentiate their staff roles required a training program that worked with groups instead of individuals, and let the people who had to make the change decide on and help design the changes.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

We found our candidate for a training program in a strategy called organizational Development (OD). OD is an educational process whose primary object is, in Sherwood's words, to develop

> ...self-renewing, self-correcting systems of people who learn to organize themselves in a variety of ways according to the nature of their tasks, and who continue to expand the choices available to the organization as it copes with the changing demands of a changing environment. --(Sherwood, 1971, p. 1)

Although originally developed in industrial settings, OD is easily adaptable to the special needs of educational groups. A major contribution to the use of OD in schools is the program developed by Richard Schmuck and Philip Runkel at the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration (CASEA) at the University of Oregon. The basic concepts that guide this group's training are summarized in this passage from Theory to Guide Organizational Training in Schools:

> Organizational training.....remains fixed on organizational roles and norms and their relationships. It represents an amalgamation of theory from group dynamics on the one hand and General Systems theory on the other. Although organizational training makes use of the organization as its own laboratory, laboratory groups are used in ways very different from sensitivity training or the T-group. The targets of organizational training are the membership as a whole and as sub-groups. The training seeks to increase the effectiveness

> of groups as task-oriented entities and tries to lead participants to function more effectively as components of working bodies carrying out specific tasks in that particular job setting. (Schmuck, Runkel, and Langmeyer, 1969, p. 2)

Goal of Organizational Development Training

The major emphasis of OD training is on improving the "self-changing ability of school organizations," that is, giving school systems a capacity for "organizational self-renewal." It is important to note that the emphasis of OD is on the processes of change, not the content; the OD trainer does not tell a school staff that it must adopt a specific organizational structure or way of doing things. Instead, he teaches skills and procedures that the staff can use to set its own goals, and to put into action plans for reaching those goals. An OD training program helps each individual school diagnose its own particular needs. Likewise, the objectives are unique to each school.

Typically, however, OD training programs do have in common certain objectives that arise from dealing with issues and problems that seem to be common to all school organizations. Essentially, these six objectives focus on problems within schools that prevent the release of existing human potential. To release this human potential, OD helps groups to:

1. Develop Clear Communication

   OD training attempts to open channels of communication within the school and between the school and other parts of its environment, such as students, other schools, the central administration, and patrons of the district. Attempts are made to provide

participants with new communication skills and to develop new patterns and procedures that facilitate clear and open communication.

2. Build Trust and Increase Understanding

   OD assumes that, for organizational effectiveness, it is important for individuals and groups in different parts of the school and the school district to trust and understand one another. Therefore, training efforts focus upon opening interpersonal communication channels so that feelings can be expressed and dealt with in a climate of openness.

3. Involve More People in the Decision-Making Process

   OD training helps groups identify effective decision-making procedures and provides participants with new skills in decision-making. Procedures that encourage sharing of information and identifying decision-making responsibilities are also part of OD training.

4. Create an Open Problem-Solving Climate

   OD training attempts to help groups identify more clearly the problems confronting them and to develop, in collaborative ways, workable plans for solving them.

5. Increase Group Effectiveness

   OD training helps groups work together at their tasks more effectively by helping group members analyze and improve the methods the group uses to make decisions and to solve problems. OD training also gives group members skills and procedures that help them recognize

and deal with social-emotional issues that are always present (but usually hidden) in groups, such as problems of communication, influence, feelings, conflict, leadership styles and struggles, and so on.

6. Uncover Conflict

OD training provides participants with skills and procedures that allow conflict to emerge into the open so that it can be handled and managed constructively, rather than kept hidden where its effects remain destructive.

Organizational Development Training Strategies

The specific activities that might make up a typical OD learning experience for a group follow directly from different aspects of the basic notion of "experiential learning." First, the individual or group needs information about what he or it does, and how others react to that behavior. Second, the individual or group needs to explore new ways of doing things that are potentially more productive and satisfying. Third, the individual or group needs to translate what he or it has learned into the "real-life" working situation. The activities listed below show how OD training helps individuals and groups gather information, practice new ways of doing things and put the learnings to work.

Perhaps the cornerstone of an OD intervention is the notion of "survey feedback." Participants learn how to generate data (survey) that can be publicly shared (feedback) and can serve as a springboard for planning and action. This strategy also encourages members to become systematic in goal setting and to keep using data collection as

as a way of assessing movement toward stated goals.

"Skill training" for all individuals is a second integral part of an OD intervention. Participants are given opportunities to practice various skills in communication, problem-solving, and decision-making, in an open environment that increases the ease of trying out new behaviors and risking new ideas and feelings.

A third specific OD activity is termed "group exercises." Through exercises or simulations, group members interact with one another while focusing on a specific aspect of the way they work together. In these "learning games," group members can look at the group's processes of communicating, solving problems, etc. without the pressures that build up in their real jobs. For example, a teaching team might work together solving a puzzle, then discuss learnings about group cooperation, and finally look at ways that they might be more cooperative in planning a reading program.

"Intergroup exercises" are a fourth important strategy used in OD training workshops or labs. Again through the use of simulations, two or more groups are brought together for the purpose of resolving conflict, reducing competition and clearing up misperceptions they may have of each other.

Participants are also taught several new "procedures" that lead to increased organizational effectiveness. Procedures differ from exercises and simulations. The latter are designed to generate information and learning, while procedures can be used again and again as part of the group's daily work. For example, a particular problem-solving procedure may help groups more effectively define and deal with

problems. The use of the "fishbowl" procedure may increase meeting effectiveness by involving more group members in discussions and later decisions based on the discussions. Practice in confronting each other helps members of the organization uncover conflict so that it can be managed in constructive ways.

OD - Not Sensitivity Training

OD training should not be confused with traditional human relations training or sensitivity training. Commonly, sensitivity training brings together people who do not know each other to focus on individual learning, and to help each person become more aware of himself and the way others see him. In contrast, OD works only with intact task groups, and the major focus is upon organizational effectiveness. OD training deals specifically with increasing the productivity and satisfaction of group members' job-related interaction. Skills in communication, decision-making, problem-solving, managing conflict, and in giving constructive feedback provide participants with tools that will enhance their ability to work more effectively toward achieving organizational objectives. Many participants usually gain in interpersonal competence, but this is incidental to the primary objectives of developing more effective groups.

OD IN THE DS SCHOOLS

Summer Design

OD training for the DS schools was conducted in the summer of 1970; all administrative, teaching, and supportive staff participated. A week-long laboratory was held for the Edgewood staff in June, and another week-long laboratory was held for the Parker and Spring Creek staffs in mid-August. Each staff received 40 hours' training in five

days of eight hours each. A subgroup of each staff from Whiteaker, Howard, Laurel Hill, and Meadow Lark Schools received a training program similar to OD. This training, labeled Group Development (GD), provided the subgroup with the same skills as the OD staffs. At Whiteaker and Howard, each subgroup, assisted by CASEA staff, planned a program for providing the same training to the total staff. The subgroups at Laurel Hill, and Meadow Lark Schools provided the training program without the help of CASEA staff.

The first two days of the training week were spent mainly in simulations and exercises designed by the CASEA trainers to encourage participants to become aware of and develop skills in communication, interpersonal relations, and group and organizational processes. Examples of exercises used are the Kerner Group Consensus Task, Non-Verbal and Verbal Tinker Toy Exercise, Five Square and Hollow-Square Puzzles. (These exercises are explained in detail in Schmuck and Runkel, A Preliminary Manual for Organizational Training in Schools, (1968) and Schmuck and Runkel, Organizational Training for A School Faculty. (1970) The game-like nature of these exercises created much enthusiasm on the part of participants. The exercises also generated considerable data that participants can use during debriefing sessions to generalize about communications, interpersonal relations and group processes in their schools. Specific communication skills of paraphrasing, behavior description, feeling description and perception checking were introduced, using materials developed by John Wallen, a Portland social psychologist. Participants were encouraged to practice these skills throughout the week. This phase of the training culminated with an evening session on the second day devoted to theory input on decision

making, roles, communication networks, evaluation, and self-renewal.

The last three days of the training were devoted to learning and practicing. First, each staff identified a number of organizational problems within their schools. Although specific problems differed from building to building, topics common to all the staffs included role definition, organizational flexibility, school philosophy and objectives, involvement in the school's decision-making process and using the variety pool of individual talents. Participants were then divided into several problem-solving groups. Each group followed a problem-solving sequence using the following stages: (1) identifying the problem, (2) analyzing the problems through force-field analysis, (3) checking on the group's effectiveness, (4) evaluating the force-field, (5) generating alternative actions by brainstorming, (6) checking on the group's effectiveness, (7) designing plans for action, and (8) anticipating barriers to carrying out the action plan effectively.

Each group designed several "plans for action" which were shared with the total faculty on the last day of the workshop. These plans, as it turned out, served as initial springboards for each staff as they proceeded to implement their versions of a unitized school. In addition the plans became charts on which to measure progress. Training activities during the school year often focused on these plans. Sometimes the staff asked, "Are we getting where we want to go?" Other times, plans were abandoned and new plans devised.

Follow Up Training

During the 1970-71 school year, the Parker and Spring Creek staffs each received approximately forty hours of follow-up training. This training was supplemented with a number of visits to the buildings

by the DS Coordinators and CASEA staff members. Most follow-up training was conducted with sub-groups of the staffs, and consisted of additional work with and review of the communication skills, problem-solving procedures, and decision-making practices.

Specifically, four major objectives guided the follow-up training efforts:

1. Supporting successful performances of the problem-solving groups that were commenced during the August training.
2. Training intact sub-groups to work together effectively, especially the teaching units and the leadership group.
3. Giving special leadership training to sub-groups that would become special resources for organizational self-renewal.
4. Collaborating with members of the staff (especially the leadership team) in arranging learning experiences in organizational development for the rest of the staff.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

In April of 1971, the Eugene Principals' Association and the Eugene Education Association requested permission to observe the DS schools and submit a progress report on their observations. In that report, the following references to the OD training labs were provided:

> The CASEA (Organizational Development Workshops) were often mentioned as being imperative, and in many cases cited as the only thing that made it possible for the team(s) to function as well as they did. This seems to be one of the really unique facts of Differentiated Staffing; namely, the training and confidence developed in the art of communication. It was evident that in nearly everything observed improved or changed communication

> skills were playing a key role. Although the communication skills are not entirely new it was evident that there has been considerable impact by CASEA training in establishing communication methods as a backbone of all innovations in the school.
>
> More communication is taking place in the Differentiated Staffing program than can be observed in a more traditional pattern of operation. The teams required communication between their respective members and with the Principal. In some cases, this communication may be dominated by the Curriculum Associate or the Principal. In other cases, the lack of dominance results in both a better working relationship where capabilities of the individuals of the team made this possible, and a poorer relationship where leadership is not demonstrated. (June, 1971)

Also in April and May of 1971, CASEA Staff and the DS Coordinators collected various information to assess the effectiveness of OD Training. The following conclusions are based upon observations, interviews, and questionnaire data gathered from Parker and Spring Creek staff members.

1. The levels of competence of the staffs in using communication skills, problem-solving procedures and conflict-resolving techniques are positive but varied. Some teaching Units have more easily adapted to the skills and procedures than others. In Units in which each individual is committed to maintaining a climate of open and honest communication, the group is able to share fully relevant information and to solve problems effectively. Where this commitment does not exist, the group suffers from problems and does not work together as effectively.
2. Nearly all staffs and teaching Units have asked for a less cumbersome problem-solving sequence than the one presented in the OD lab, or have developed their

own methods to short-cut and speed up the process. Generally, these "stream-lines" problem-solving procedures include four main stages:

a) identifying and stating the problem

b) generating alternative solutions

c) selecting one alternative

d) evaluating the results

3. The teaching Units in each school have become the chief groups for problem-solving. It was originally planned that temporary problem-solving committees would be formed to work on curriculum, but that has not occurred. Most instructional problems have been solved by the teaching Units or the leadership group. Each group has, however, used the services and advice of both persons within the schools and district-wide personnel with particular curriculum strengths in the problem-solving process.

4. The creation of the Unitized, Differentiated Staffing School has expanded and strengthened communication between teachers. Communication between staff members within each Unit has been considerably strengthened, as measured by observations of Unit meetings and by the numerous changes in instructional programs within each Unit. However, most of the inter-Unit communication takes place between the Curriculum Associates, not at the teacher level.

5. It is obvious to observers that the goal of constructive openness and trust among staff members in each school has been approached although not fully realized. There are still instances in which individuals express concerns about programs, and about other individuals, to persons other than those causing the concern. However, there is a higher level of support among staff members for attempting innovations in instruction, but there is still a lot to be done.

In summary, we would say that the OD and GD training has had a positive impact upon staffs in the project schools. However, it must be realized that building effective organizations is a slow and difficult process and that it will take more than just one year for staffs to build trust relationships, communication lines, and problem-solving procedures. What is important is that the training programs have, without a doubt, demonstrated to staff members the need for positive communication and interpersonal relations. Most staff members <u>are</u> showing strides, each at his own rate, toward utilizing the skills learned in OD.

Consequently, there must be a continuing program of follow-up training in the skills initially presented in the summer labs. It would be grossly unfair to expect that a school staff could learn, practice, and perfect all of the skills in one year, and then continue them without some follow-up. As was mentioned earlier, a football team gets better only by practicing together. Likewise, the school staff, teaching Unit, and individual can get better only by practicing. OD training has provided the initial plays and game plan. The practice and execution of the skills must be carried out by the staffs with

further assistance provided as it is needed.

A FINAL REMARK

Optimism

We are extremely optimistic about the part that OD training can play in humanizing and rebuilding the schools not only in Eugene but in other parts of the country as well. However, two important cautions must be observed. First, because we believe that effective and meaningful change must be a planned effort that is sustained over a long period of time, we further believe that continuous or periodic OD training should be built into the change effort. Second, staff members can't say, "Well, we've had a summer shot of OD, so now we're inoculated against bad communication and that's the answer to all our educational problems." Instead, staff members should realize that the main benefit of OD training is the development of individual skills and organizational resources that allow further action to be taken.

A desirable goal for schools is a structure and operating methods that will allow -- and call upon -- educators and students to use their own resources. Also, this structure and method must reflect a spirit of joint inquiry and capacity for self-renewal. Using the method of OD training is itself a substantive step toward that educational goal because it is a way of looking at that important "people part" of organizational life. In the long run, OD can help toward that major goal of making educational organizations more humane as well as more effective.

OD Specialists

In October, 1970, the Differentiated Staffing Coordinators, together with CASEA, began planning an Organizational Development Program

for the district. This program was designed to train a Cadre of 20 to 30 OD specialists for the district. A cross-section of district personnel, including teachers, administrators, etc. were selected and trained as a team. The Cadre will carry OD to school staffs and other district groups by providing training in communication skills, group processes, and interpersonal relations.

The planners of this program hope that the Cadre will perform the following functions:

1. provide a source of fresh ideas on organizational variety;
2. provide a channel through which other people's ideas on organizational innovations, both from within the district and from without, can be brought to points where the ideas can be converted into reality; and
3. provide an agency for improving skills in inter-personnel communications, and group problem solving.

The creation of a cadre of organizational specialists will directly benefit Eugene, particularly if the district decides to expand the Unitized Differentiated Staffing concept. The district now has its own group of OD trainers and should not have to rely entirely upon the resources of outside agencies for OD Training.

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